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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 004716

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PREL PGOV TU CY EU

SUBJECT: REACTION TO TURKISH DECLARATION OF NON-RECOGNITION OF CYPRUS

REF: A. ANKARA 4486

1B. PARIS 5307

1C. PARIS 5350

(U) Classified by Political Counselor John Kunstadter, E.O. 12958, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary: Turkey's July 29 declaration that is does not recognize the Republic of Cyprus (ROC) (ref A) has raised little controversy among EU diplomats in Ankara: it is what most expected, and not as extreme as some feared. Turkish media cautiously welcomed the protocol and non-recognition declaration. Turkish reaction to French PM de Villepin's August 2 statement implying accession negotiations cannot go forward absent recognition (refs B and C) has been restrained. EU diplomats here, including the UK, expect Cyprus-related objections to be resolved before October 3, but worry about attempts by the French and others to make textual changes to the negotiating framework for Turkey. After October 3, demands that Turkey open ports and airports to the ROC will become a serious issue. End Summary.

Turkish Declaration Raises Little Controversy

12. (C) Turkey's July 29 declaration that extension of the Customs Union does not constitute recognition of the ROC has raised little controversy among EU diplomats in Ankara. The declaration was along the lines most expected and not as extreme as some feared. The French DCM claims that the declaration is a "new element" that calls into question Turkey's will to implement the protocol, but this flies in the face of the fact that the declaration was widely-discussed beforehand -- and in the face of her own apparent surprise at PM de Villepin's reaction to it.

13. (C) In the end, no one, not even term President and Turkey supporter UK, saw the declaration text before its release. MFA Northeastern Mediterranean Affairs A/DDG Bilman would not even let junior diplomats in his own department work on it. However, UK Ambassador Westmacott held extended discussions with Bilman and his boss, Deputy U/S Apakan, and made specific recommendations on the text.

14. (U) Turkish media cautiously welcomed the protocol signing and the non-recognition declaration. Cuneyt Ulsever, a columnist for "Hurriyet" who has been highly critical of the Erdogan government in recent weeks, wrote that the government "should be congratulated" on the move. Oktay Eksi, another "Hurriyet" columnist with strong links to the Turkish secular establishment, welcomed the signing as another step toward EU membership talks, but expressed concerns about EU reaction to Turkey's declaration and the long-term implications of the protocol for Turkish Cypriots. The pro-Government Islamist "Yeni Safak" hailed the start of the "countdown to EU negotiations," highlighting the Prime Minister's comments that Turkey is "rolling up its sleeves" for an EU process that will be "as delicate as knitting lace." The paper also reported Foreign Minister Gul's claim that Turkey had "fulfilled its commitment of December 17" and his assertion that there are "no more obstacles" in Turkey's path to accession talks. A sour note was sounded by the leftist-nationalist "Cumhuriyet" which stressed that the protocol had been signed "despite every warning." The paper raised the possibility of an EU counter-declaration and predicted that Cyprus could veto Turkey's accession talks despite the Government's action. All media noted the criticism of opposition party leaders to the signing of the protocol, but with the exception of "Cumhuriyet," major dailies gave the naysayers short shrift.

15. (C) According to UK Polchief Miller, FM Gul was pleased by the Turkish media reaction.

Restrained Reaction to de Villepin Statement

16. (C) Turkish reaction to PM de Villepin's August 2 statement that opening negotiations is not "conceivable" absent Turkish recognition of the ROC has been restrained. PM Erdogan said he was "saddened" by the news, but he and PM Gul have both avoided extreme rhetoric. We will encourage Turkish officials to continue along these lines and avoid

giving ammunition to EU Turkey-skeptics before October 3.

¶7. (C) Our EU contacts here ascribe de Villepin's statement to French domestic politics instead of a serious intention to block the October 3 opening of negotiations absent Turkish recognition of the ROC. Miller and the Danish DCM both expect ostensible French Cyprus-related objections to be resolved after the August 25 COREPER and September 1-2 Gymnich meetings.

¶8. (C) In the wake of the extension protocol, the non-recognition declaration, and de Villepin's statement, Turkish MFA U/S Tuygan told the UK that the MFA is considering a swing through selected EU capitals (possibly including Paris, Vienna and the Hague) by either him or FM Gul. Timing is a question mark; Ankara and EU capitals are in an August vacation lull.

Next Steps

¶9. (C) The UK is preparing a draft counter-declaration for discussion at the August 25 COREPER. According to PolChief Miller, the declaration will welcome Turkish signing of the extension protocol; note the unilateral nature of the Turkish non-recognition declaration; and note that the ROC has acceded to the EU. It may also include a statement that the members states look forward to implementation of the extension protocol.

¶10. (C) EU diplomats here expect the ROC to push the EU to require Turkey to open its ports and airports to the ROC before October 3, but do not anticipate this will succeed. However, port and airports will become a deadly serious issue after October 3. The Turks fiercely oppose this, particularly when "TRNC" port and airports remain closed to EU trade. Unilateral Turkish concession on this score will spark a firestorm of domestic criticism. Miller hopes the EU can give the GOT a Cyprus-related political concession to serve as a fig leaf for opening ports and airports.

¶11. (C) Contradictory statements from GOT officials make it unclear whether the GOT intends to submit the extension protocol for parliamentary ratification. If the GOT does decide to submit the protocol, parliament can ratify by simple majority. We expect that, if the GOT does submit the protocol to parliament, it will not do so before October 3; Miller agrees. PM Erdogan's AKP has 355 of 550 deputies, but the numerical advantage could be weakened in the event of more controversy between Turkey and the EU on issues like ports and airports or the content of Turkey's negotiating framework.

Concerns About the Negotiating Framework

¶12. (C) Although he expects Cyprus issues will not in the end block the October 3 opening of negotiations, the well-connected Danish DCM is worried there is not enough time before October 3 to resolve anticipated French, Austrian, Greek and ROC demands for changes to the negotiating framework text. UK PolChief Miller calls this "doable" before October 3 but admits the UK is nervous about France. The UK Embassy expects that the French will use what they will portray as a concession in dropping Cyprus-related objections to push for a tougher text. Miller told us the French have not yet proposed specific textual changes, but she anticipates the French will seek to expand language on the open-ended nature of negotiations, a hot-button issue for the Turks.

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